



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING PROMOTED BY
THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC LEGISLATORS NETWORK**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 27 August 2021*

[Multimedia]

I am sorry for not speaking to you while standing, but I am still in a time of post-operative recovery and need to remain seated. Please excuse me.

Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased once more to meet with you, lawmakers and political and civic leaders from various nations, at this critical moment in our history – a critical moment. I thank Cardinal Schönborn and Dr Alting von Geusau for their kind words of greeting and introduction. I am also happy that His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Syro-Orthodox Church, is present with us.

From its founding in 2010, the International Catholic Legislators Network has accompanied, supported and promoted the work of the Holy See, bearing witness to the Gospel in the service of your individual countries and the international community as a whole. I am grateful for your love for the Church and for your readiness to cooperate in her mission.

Our gathering today takes place at a very troubled moment in time. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to rage. Although significant progress has been made through the creation and distribution of effective vaccines, much work remains to be done. There have been more than 200 million confirmed cases and 4 million deaths due to this terrible scourge, which has caused immense economic and social devastation.

As a result, your work as lawmakers and political leaders is more important than ever. Charged with serving the common good, you are now being challenged to direct your efforts to the integral renewal of your communities and of society as a whole. This entails more than simply combatting the virus or seeking to return to the status quo prior to the pandemic; that would be a setback. No, it demands confronting the deeper causes that the crisis has laid bare and aggravated: poverty, social inequality, widespread unemployment, and the lack of access to education. Brothers and sisters, we never emerge from a crisis the same: we will emerge either better or worse. Moreover, we do not emerge from a crisis by ourselves: we must either emerge together or we will not be able to emerge from it at all.

In an age of upheaval and political polarization, legislators and politicians in general are not always held in high esteem. Yet what loftier vocation can there be than that of serving the common good and placing the welfare of the community before our personal advantage? That must always be your goal, for a good politics is indispensable for universal fraternity and social peace (*Fratelli Tutti*, 176).

In our age particularly, one of the greatest challenges confronting us is the administration of technology for the common good. The wonders of modern science and technology have increased our quality of life. “It is right to rejoice in these advances and to be excited by the immense possibilities that they continue to open up before us, for science and technology are wonderful products of a God-given human creativity” (*Laudato Si'*, 102). At the same time, left to themselves and to market forces alone, without suitable guidelines provided by legislative assemblies and public authorities guided by a sense of social responsibility, these innovations can end up becoming a threat to the dignity of the human person.

This has nothing to do with curbing technological advances. By means of policies and regulations, lawmakers can protect human dignity from whatever may threaten it. I think, for example, of the scourge of child pornography, the misuse of personal data, attacks on critical infrastructures such as hospitals, and the spread of false information on social media, among other issues. Prudent legislation can guide the development and application of technology in the service of the common good. Brothers and sisters, I heartily encourage you, therefore, to make every effort to undertake serious and in-depth moral reflection on the risks and possibilities associated with scientific and technological advances, so that the international laws and regulations governing them may concentrate on promoting integral human development and peace, rather than on progress as an end in itself.

Legislators and political leaders naturally reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the people they represent; each has his or her own specific gifts to offer in service to the welfare of all. The involvement of citizens in the various sectors of social, civic and political life remains essential. All of us are called to foster the spirit of solidarity, starting with the needs of our weakest and most disadvantaged brothers and sisters. If we are to heal our world so harshly tried by the pandemic,

and build a more inclusive and sustainable future in which technology serves human needs without isolating us from one another, we need not only responsible citizens, but also capable leaders inspired by the principle of the common good.

Dear friends, may the Lord enable you to become a leaven for the renewal of minds, hearts and spirit, witnesses of “political love” (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 180ff.) for the most vulnerable, so that, in serving them, you may serve him in all that you do.

To you, your families and your work, I cordially impart my blessing. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.